

Weather

Area bank makes offer on Goodland branches



National Weather Service Tonight: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms before 9 p.m. Patchy fog after 1 a.m. Otherwise, partly cloudy, with a low around 53. South wind around 10 mph.

Tuesday: Areas of fog before 10 a.m. Otherwise, sunny, with a high near 87. Southwest wind between 10 and 15 mph.

Tuesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 54. South wind 5 to 15 mph becoming north.

Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 84. North wind 5 to 10 mph becoming south.

Wednesday Night: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 54.

Thursday: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms after 1 p.m. Mostly sunny, with a high near 81.

Thursday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 55.

Friday: Sunny, with a high near 86.

Friday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 57.

Saturday: Sunny, with a high near 85.

Saturday Night: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Partly cloudy, with a low around 57.

Sunday: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms. Mostly sunny, with a high near 82.

Friday: High, 65; Low 42 Saturday: High, 65; Low 45 Sunday: High, 70; Low 44 Precip: Friday 0.40 inches Saturday None Sunday None Month: 2.83 inches Year: 4.50 inches Normal: 3.98 inches (K-State Experiment Station) Sunrise and Sunset Tuesday 6:45 a.m. 8:38 p.m. Moon: waxing, 74 percent Wednesday 6:44 a.m. 8:39 p.m. Moon: waxing, 83 percent (U.S. Naval Observatory)

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Mr. Walter said he couldn't say how long the process will take but estimated 60 to 90 days if all goes well.

"It's completely dependent on approval of the regulators," he said. "I'm hoping for the end of June."

It would be good for both banks, he noted, if the sale could go through by the end of June because banks have to put out a call report, or statement of condition, each quarter and that would be the end of June.

First National has branches in Goodland, Colby, Oberlin, St. Francis, Bird City, Quinter and Kirk, Colo.

Mr. Walter said the decision to buy just the three branches is purely a business decision and he couldn't really comment on it. Nor would he say how much The Bank has offered for the three. Both those items, he said, are covered under a confidentiality agreement signed by both banks.

In Goodland, Dwane Timm, president of First National Bank, said that he could not comment

on whether any of the other branches were for sale or not. A deal to sell the entire operation to a Colorado firm fell through last year.

While the approval process is going forward, Mr. Walter said, The Bank's people are working to make sure the information systems between the two can work together. This could take quite a bit of time, money and manpower, he noted, since computer and software systems of two businesses are seldom compatible.

However, he noted, The Bank officials are optimistic that the sale will happen and want to be as ready as possible to make an easy switch over.

Customers of the affected branches shouldn't worry, he said.

"The only thing people will notice is a name change on their checks and the sign on the building," he said.

The Bank will buy back any checks that still say First National from the customers in those branches that change, he said. That's just one of the liabilities that The Bank will assume

along with things like contracts for postage machines.

Mr. Walter noted that it will be 10 years in May since The Bank bought the Colby, Norcatur and Oberlin branches of Gold Bank. At that time, he said, people didn't notice much change and they won't again.

In fact, Gold Bank had just purchased the assets of Farmers National Bank in Oberlin and Norcatur not long before, so those customers had a change of banks twice in just a few years.

The Bank today has branches in Oberlin, Jennings, Norcatur, Oakley, Colby, Winona, Selden, Atwood, Herndon and Norton. With the addition of the three branches, it will have 10 full-service branches because the Colby locations would be counted as one and two part-time branches - Norcatur and Herndon - have no loan officers on site.

As a bonus, Mr. Walter said, The Bank customers will be getting more electronic banking services, although it may take six months to a year to get them put into full effect.

Kansas jail escapes prompt move of higher-risk prisoners

From "JAIL," Page 1

The escape raised questions about the type of criminals being transferred from state prisons to county jails to help ease overcrowding. In addition to Santos Carrera-Morales, who was convicted in Wichita of two counts of first-degree murder, the other three escapees had records that included aggravated assault on a law enforcement officer, robbery, aggravated battery, kidnapping in commission of a crime and aggravated battery.

Secretary of Corrections Ray Roberts told The Wichita Eagle (bit.ly/JCuo9B) that several inmates doing time for sex crimes or murder have been moved from jails to prison to help the public feel safe.

"We're trying to be sensitive to the public's perceptions, but we stand by our jails that we have our inmates in," Roberts said. "We deem those to be safe and secure."

The four county jails had contracts with the state to house prisoners for about \$40 a day. Besides Ottawa County, jails in Butler, Cowley and Leavenworth counties all had been built within the past decade and were newer than the state's prisons, Roberts said.

State facilities are 200 inmates over capacity, he added.

Carrera-Morales was arrested without incident April 19 at a truck stop in Russell, about 80 miles from where he escaped. One of the other escapees was arrested soon after breaking out, one turned

himself in at North Platte, Neb., and the other was arrested in Omaha.

No convicted murderers currently are being held in either the Butler or Cowley County jails under contract with the state, while the Leavenworth County jail had two inmates with convictions for second-degree murder or attempted first-degree murder.

Roberts said that at least for the near term, the state wouldn't need to send any inmates to the Ottawa County jail.

State Rep. Pat Colloton, a Leawood Republican who heads legislative committees that deal with corrections issues, said state policy should be not to send convicted murderers from state prisons to county jails, unless they had served their time, are about to be released and are part of an approved work-release program.

Although she doesn't think convicted murderers are automatically at a higher risk of escape, Colloton said, the nature of their crimes raises concern among the public.

"I think people's feeling safe is as important as them actually being safe," she said.

Roberts said the need to move some state inmates to county jails was prompted by legislative changes that are sending more offenders to prison and for longer terms. He said he hopes the Legislature will approve an expansion of state prison beds to reduce the need to send inmates to county jails.

Briefly

College spring concert set for Tuesday

The Colby Community College music department will hold its annual free Spring Concert at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Northwest Kansas Cultural Arts Center on campus. It will include the Concert Choir and Sunflower Singers directed by Dr. Philip Shuman and the Concert Band and Jazz Ensemble directed by Tony Schroer. Pat Ziegelmeier will accompany the vocalists. This is the final performance for Dr. Shuman, a long-time instructor who plans to retire at the end of the year. Everyone is invited.

Vehicle, license offices to go down Tuesday

Driver's license about to expire? It won't be possible to get a Kansas vehicle license, title, driver's license or identification card from Tuesday through Tuesday, May 8, while the computer system at the Kansas Department of Revenue in Topeka is shut down for upgrades. For information, call Thomas County Treasurer Donita Applebury at 460-4520.

Area churches planning for Day of Prayer

Colby churches will observe the 61st National Day of Prayer with a service near the flagpole outside the Thomas County Courthouse from 12:15 to 12:45 p.m. Thursday sponsored by the Thomas County Ministerial Association. For information, call Pastor Tom Peyton at (785) 462-2930.

Fourth, fifth grades to give concert at school

Colby Grade School fourth graders will play their recorders and the fifth-grade band will play at a free concert at 2:30 and 7 p.m. Thursday in the Colby Grade School Auditorium. For information, call Jennifer Koel at 460-5100.

Church women to have Friendship Day

Church Women United's May Friendship Day will be Friday at the Colby First Presbyterian Church, beginning at noon with a salad luncheon in the fellowship hall. This year's theme, about Naomi and Ruth, is "Listening to My Sisters." It looks at the mission of listening, caring and accepting new members of a community. For information, call Joyce Gatlin at (785) 460-3656.

'Walk for Hope' fund raiser open to everyone

The Second Annual Walk for Hope begins 1 p.m. Saturday at the agricultural center at Colby Community College. "Bring your dog or a two-legged friend to enjoy the walk," said Faculty Alliance representative Dr. Marcy Ward. Proceeds will go to the Northwest Kansas Foundation for Hope, which helps area people with cancer-related expenses. A \$15 donation is suggested. For information, call Ward at 460-5465.

Pride of Prairie to give Salvador concert

The Pride of the Prairie Orchestra will present "Science and Nature" conducted by Andrew Salvador at 3:30 p.m. Sunday in the Frahm Theatre of the Cultural Arts Center on the Colby Community College campus. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for seniors and \$3 for students. For information, call Janet Hopson at 462-5102.

Kansas basketball stars coming to Colby

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Thomas County is sponsoring an appearance by the Kansas Barnstormers basketball team, featuring graduating seniors from the University of Kansas, at 5 p.m. Sunday at the Community Building. Tickets at \$10 per person may be purchased at Palace Drug Store, F&M Bank at Dillons, J&B Meat Market, the Sports Shoppe and People's State Bank in Colby and Farmers Bank and Trust in Brewster. For information, call Doug Finley at Big Brothers Big Sisters, 460-9125.

Class will teach about diabetes, blood sugar

Citizens Medical Center will continue a monthly series of free classes on diabetes, "Journey for Control," from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 8, in the hospital conference room. The topic will be "Achieving Blood Glucose Control." Register by calling Jeanene Brown at the hospital's education department, (785) 460-4850.

Colby Spring Cleanup week coming up

Colby's annual spring cleanup will be next Monday to Friday, May 7 to 11. Residential trash customers may clean and spruce up their yards and have the city remove items if they are boxed and bagged, weigh less than 50 pounds and placed at the curb. Call the city manager's office at 460-4410 to schedule a pickup. For questions, call Jo Strange at the same number.

LOCAL TV Listings Sponsored by the COLBY FREE PRESS

Table with columns for Tuesday Evening, Wednesday Evening, and Premium Channels, listing various TV shows and their broadcast times.

American Profile We Celebrate Hometown Life. Stories from hometowns just like yours. Look for us each week in this paper. Includes a table of featured stories and a list of premium channels.